



# Communications Focus Group Results



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# About Report

Since 2009, the Michigan Roundtable has been increasingly interested in knowing more about the interests and characteristics of the people that it serves and those that support the organization.

These focus groups build on surveys that were conducted in 2009 and 2011.

The surveys showed us that the majority of our constituents are more than 36 years old, of European descent, have a college degree, can contribute 3 to 4 hours a month of time to our organization, and feel that anti-discrimination or inclusion efforts are one of the top ten issues they care about. More than 50% of our constituents are between 50 and 65 years old, and more than 50% have a Master's Degree or higher.

A breakdown of roughly 100 participants who responded to an online communications survey in August 2009 is as follows:

- Caucasian/European American: 68%
- African/African American/Black: 24%
- Asian/Indian/ Pacific Islander: 4%
- Native American/American Indian: 1%
- Arab/Chaldean: 3%

These surveys allowed us to learn some important demographic information about our constituents. The focus groups allowed us a more in-depth window into our constituents' perceptions and preferences. It is our hope that by learning more about our constituents we can improve the ways we communicate with you and the work that we do.

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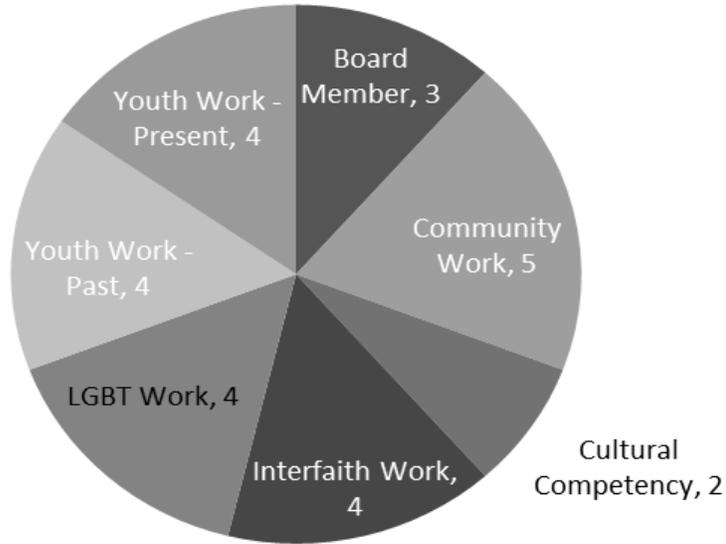
# Communications Focus Groups

26 Total Attendees

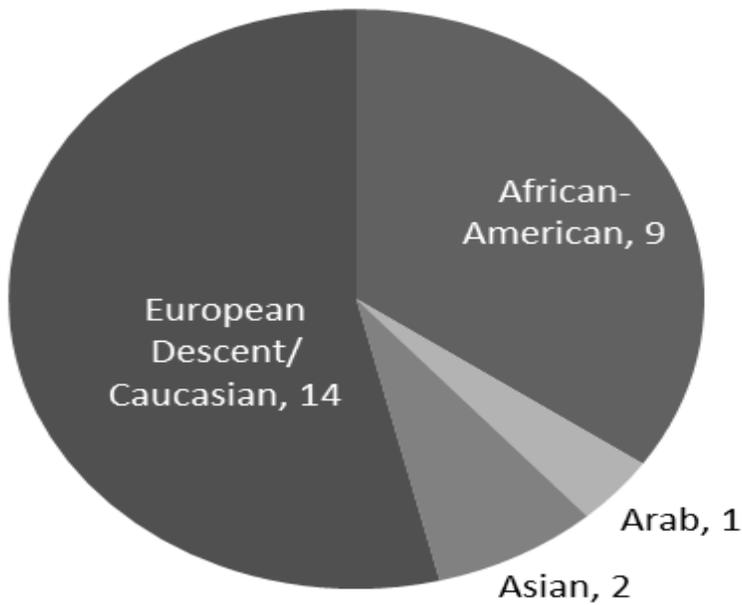
March – April 2012

## Demographics

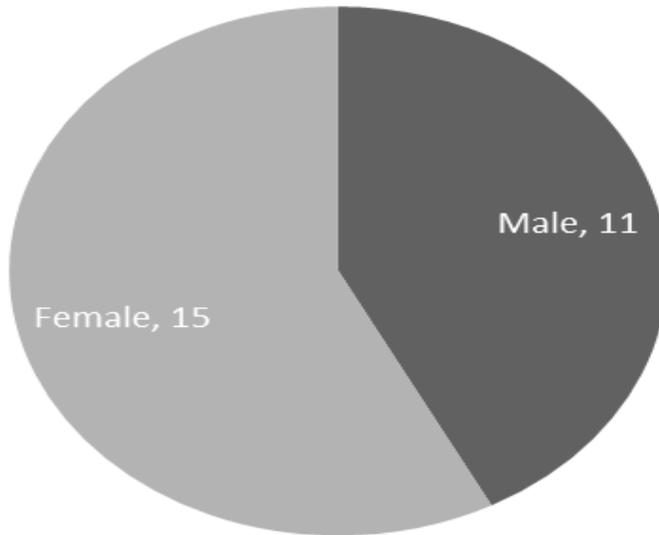
### 1. How People were connected to the Michigan Roundtable



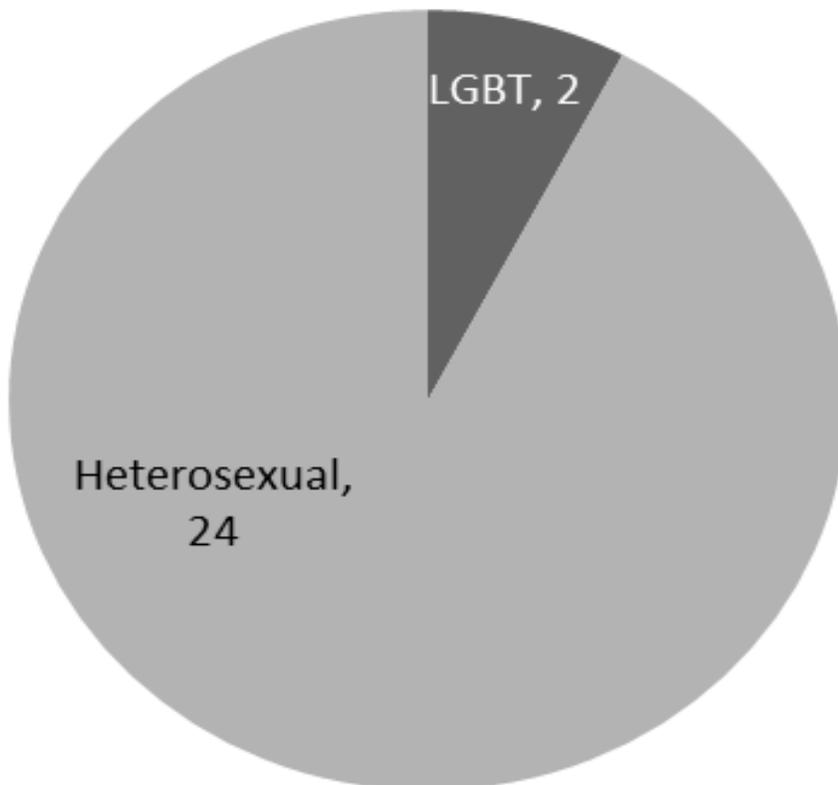
### 2. Race/Ethnicity



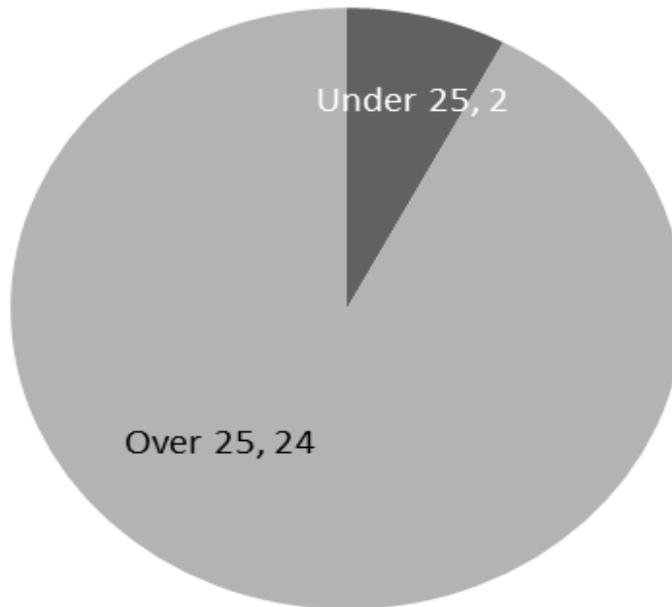
### 3. Gender



### 4. Sexual Orientation



## 5. Age Range



## **Focus Group Themes**

### **1. Communications**

People felt that the organization’s communications via its website and newsletter were both professional and informative. Roughly half the respondents reported receiving the monthly email newsletter. There was a general consensus that email is a sensible and cost-effective communications vehicle, but that people are overwhelmed by all the emails they receive from all kinds of sources. Some also noted that our emails lacked a clear “call to action” or description of how people could be involved.

There was a general sense that the organization needed to segment its audience better to target messages, and needs to invest more heavily in multiple communications vehicles, including postal mail, paid advertising, and a text messaging service.

### **2. Diversity Knowledge & Preferences:**

In general, people focused on big ideas versus individual issues when discussing their knowledge around diversity issues. Nationally people identified themes of polarization, isolation, and a lack of education (both about diversity issues and a history that has created inequality) as the most critical barriers to inclusion.

In Michigan, people focused specifically on Detroit and Southeast Michigan. There were broad overarching discussions about a history of institutional racism and its effects today on the city and the region. Within this broad theme people discussed the economy and housing segregation as the most critical barriers to inclusion.

### 3. The Roundtable's Work

Participants felt that the Roundtable's work included:

- Bringing people together to build understanding of others
- Taking action (and building groups of people) to address pressing issues
- Building lasting collaborations
- Working with young people to help them value differences

There was a general consensus from people that had been involved with the Michigan Roundtable for some time that they understood what the Michigan Roundtable was about when it was part of the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ). But since it separated in 2005 there was lack of understanding around the Michigan Roundtable's mission, vision, and steps it was taking to achieve that vision. The full mission statement (our email footer) is too long and complex.

**Full Mission Statement:** Since 1941 The Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion has been a not-for-profit civil rights organization located in Detroit working to overcome discrimination and racism by crossing racial, religious, ethnic and cultural boundaries. We bring together community leaders from government, law enforcement, education, faith, grass roots organizations and business to understand different points of view and then take action to overcome structural impediments to inclusion and equity. Our programs are recognized by national organizations for bringing about sustainable change. We work to address inequity throughout our region through a process of recognition, reconciliation/reorientation and renewal. We strive to build relationships that create social justice and build sustainable inclusive communities.

Participants also identified internal and external barriers that keep the Roundtable from doing its work. External barriers were the same as those noted nationally in the "Diversity Knowledge & Preferences" section such as isolation and polarization.

**Internally**, it was noted that the organization could provide more tools to people to help their community address diversity and inclusion issues and link them together with others or organizations already working on these issues. It was also noted that the organizations conferences and events need to do a better job of providing follow up or connecting people to the organization's broader work. Some participants also noted that volunteers and board members could be asked to do more in terms of volunteer service.

### 4. Social Justice Heroes

To get at who the Michigan Roundtable should emulate, participants were asked who their social justice heroes were, particularly in Michigan.

Nationally people noted civil rights leaders and social service pioneers (Martin Luther King Jr., Geoffrey Canada, Al Sharpton, and Fannie Lou Hammer)

Locally, people noted media leaders who are good at discussing social justice issues and why they matter (Mitch Albom, Kurt Metzger, Rochelle Reiley), and people who aligned their words and actions to start organizations that are still making a difference, particularly people of faith (Father Norm Thomas, Eleanor Josaitis & Father William T. Cunningham – Focus: Hope, Father Clem Kern – Southwest Solutions, Maryanne Mahaffey, Grace Lee Boggs)

Most important locally, people noted the unsung heroes that sometimes spend lifetimes making a difference in their community. These were people like their spouses, children, relatives, neighbors, and themselves.

### **5. What makes the Michigan Roundtable unique?**

Participants agreed that the Michigan Roundtable is the only organization that they are aware of in Michigan that focuses on the many dimensions of diversity (e.g. race & ethnicity, age, ability, sexual orientation), or focus on issues of both diversity and inclusion. The organization most similar to the Michigan Roundtable was cited as Focus: Hope. Other similar organizations included New Detroit, Detroit Urban League, and Detroit NAACP. It was noted that the weakness of these other organizations is that they only focus on race.

## **Action Items**

To address the issues highlighted by focus group participants, the Michigan Roundtable will do the following in FY 12 & 13:

- A. Conduct further analysis
- B. Improve its communications tactics
- C. Invest in new communications channels